NCA
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JOHN BUE/PARIS

REVEL: SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM

ANNCR:

A CONTROVERSIAL FRENCH BOOK WRITTEN BY A CONTROVERSIAL AUTHOR HITS AT THE ROOTS OF THE CURRENT DILEMMA OF THE FRENCH LEFT. VOA'S JOHN BUE HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT.

VOICE:

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHER AND WRITER JEAN-FRANCOIS REVEL HAS ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT NO ALLIANCE IS POSSIBLE BETWEEN WESTERN SOCIALIST AND COMMUNIST PARTIES. HIS CENTRAL ARGUMENT IS HIS STEELY REJECTION OF THE LACK OF INDIVIDUAL FREEDOMS WHICH MARXISM HAS BROUGHT ABOUT IN STATES WHICH PRACTICE IT. SEVERAL YEARS AGO, HE WROTE A BOOK CALLED "MARX OR JESU" IN WHICH HE PUT FORWARD THE VIEW THAT THE FAST-CHANGING AMERICAN SOCIETY IS MORE LIKELY TO BE THE FOUNTAIN-HEAD OF THE NEXT WORLD REVOLUTION THAN COMMUNIST SOCIETIES, WHICH HE VIEWS AS SCLEROTIC.

HIS LATEST BOOK, JUST PUBLISHED IN PARIS, HAS A PROVOCATIVE TITLE: THE "SOCIALIST SUICIDE". THE SUICIDE, IN MISTER REVEL'S VIEW, IS COOPERATION WITH COMMUNISTS, WHOM HE VIEWS AS HAVING REMAINED ESSENTIALLY STALINIST. HIS CONCEPT OF PROGRESS TOWARD SOCIALISM IS ANY EVOLUTION, REFORM OR REVOLUTION WHICH TENDS TO PLACE THE ECONOMY AT THE SERVICE OF MAN RATHER THAN MAN AT THE SERVICE OF THE ECONOMY. HE POINTS OUT THAT SOME WEST EUROPEAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACIES HAVE ACHIEVED CONSIDERABLE PROGRESS. TOWARD THIS GOAL FURTHER ADVANCES TOWARD FAIR SHARING ARE NEEDED, HE ADMITS, BUT THERE HAS TO BE AN EVER LARGER CAKE TO SHARE,

AND CAPITALISM, HE FEELS, HAS SO FAR PROVED ITSELF THE BETTER COOK.

THIS LONG PHILOSOPHICAL WORK ON CONTEMPORARY POLITICS APPEARS AT A TIME WHEN FRENCH SOCIALIST LEADER FRANCOIS MITTERRAND IS UNDER FIRE FROM HIS WEST EUROPEAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTNERS FOR HIS ALLIANCE WITH THE FRENCH COMMUNISTS. WHAT WOULD COME OF FRANCE'S POSITION TOWARD THE DEFENSE OF THE WEST, THEY ASK, IF POWER CAME TO THE SOCIALISTS. AND THIS IS NOT NECESSARILY A THEORETICAL QUESTION. MISTER MITTERRAND POLLED NEARLY AS MANY VOTES TWENTY MONTHS AGO AS HIS SUCCESSFUL OPPONENT PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING. AND SINCE THEN, IN LOCAL ELECTIONS, THE SOCIALIST PARTY HAS BEEN IMPROVING ITS SCORE ALMOST EVERYWHERE.

FURTHERMORE, AFTER A LONG PERIOD OF HARSH CONTROVERSY BETWEEN FRENCH SOCIALISTS AND POLITICAL DEMOCRACY, THE COMMUNIST PARTY IS MAKING SOME SPECTACULAR MOVES TO DEMONSTRATE ITS INDEPENDENCE FROM KREMLIN LEADERS. UNLIKE SOVIET DAILY PRAVDA, MISTER MITTERRAND SAW AS A POSITIVE MOVE THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY'S DECISION TO CUT OUT THE WORDS "DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT" FROM ITS STATUTES. THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY'S TWO AND A HALF MONTH OLD PUBLIC PROTEST AGAINST SOVIET DISSIDENT LEONID PLYUSHCH'S INTERNMENT IN SEEN AS COUNTERACTING SOCIALIST CRITICISM OF REPRESSION IN THE USSR. LEADING DAILY LE MONDE WRITES THAT THE FRENCH COMMUNISTS AND SOCIALISTS HAVE NOW MOVED FROM CONFRONTATION TO COMPETITION.

WITH THE NEXT FRENCH PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS SCHEDULED TWO YEARS HENCE, THERE IS STILL TIME FOR A GOOD DEAL OF JOCKEYING. BUT THE SOCIALIST MAYORS OF TWO LARGE FRENCH CITIES HAVE DECIDED TO COOPERATE WITH THE COMMUNISTS RATHER THAN WITH THE PARTIES OF THE CENTER DURING COMING MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS.

MISTER REVEL'S BOOK IS CLEARLY A WARNING TO THE FRENCH SOCIALISTS THAT THEIR ALLIANCE WITH THE COMMUNISTS MAY IN THE LONG RUN PROVE AN OBSTACLE RATHER THAN A BOOST ON THE LONG PATH TO A RESUMPTION OF THEIR POLITICAL PREDOMINANCE OF THE FORTIES AND FIFTIES.

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